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The Difficulties on English Literature Comprehension for Modern Language Students at UASD Language School.

Research Project Presented

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Índex

Abstrat

       This research is focused on the difficulties on English Literature Comprehension for modern language students at UASD Language School and it is aimed to identy each one of those difficulties to be further studied and analyzed in order to look for a possible solution to the problem. This group has observed that a great number of students are struggling a lot to understand English Literature.

       In this investigation we have established those difficulties from the point of view of some of the many authors whose concern regards to this matter have inspired them to conduct futher research, and come up with a more concise and clear definition.

       We counted with a population of 20 students from the Anglo speaking Literature section, imparted at UASD Language School, Wednesdays from 6:P.M. to 9:P.M. and Fridays from 5:P.M. to 8:P.M. The data for the present investigation was collected mainly through observation.

       After analyzing teacher´s responses, we found that the elements to become a successful reader prior knowledge, cultural background in general, as well as, training aimed to develop reading skill in particular, and that the more a person knows about life in general, the easier for them to understand what is express in the test. Professors stated that the purpose of teaching English Literature to modern language students at UASD Language School is to get students acquainted with the culture associated to that language, ant introduce them to the different literary styles.

Keyword: Difficulty, Comprehension skills.

Introduction

When talking about difficulties on English Literature Comprehension, we mean the lack of ability that students have to read, comprehend, and analyze a literary work, and not being able to take advantage of the richness of culture embodied in each pieces of writing.

English Literature study is vital for students to upgrade their ability to read, write and speak proper English, aside from the critical role that it plays on developing the students´ open mindedness, giving them real opportunity to be exposed to foreign culture and foreign people; however, we have observed that a considerable number of modern language students are not beneficiating from it because they do not reach the level of English required to comprehend it before they are allowed to take it.

This research is focused on the difficulties on English Literature Comprehension for modern language students at UASD Language School and it is aimed to identy each one of those difficulties to be further studied and analyzed in order to look for a possible solution to the problem. In this investigation we have established those difficulties from the point of view of some of the many authors whose concern regards to this matter have inspired them to conduct futher research, and come up with a more concise and clear definition.

The Difficulties on English Literature Comprehension for Modern Language Students at

UASD Language School.

Important of the Study

English Literature is a very interesting and meaning full subject, essential for modern language students to get familiar with the English culture, and develop their analytic, critical, and questioning mind; however, a considerable number of students is not beneficianting from it to its maximun because of certain difficulties that they drag from the very beginning of the career.

Statement of the Problem

This group has asberved that a great number of students are struggling a lot to understand English Literature. The lack of ability to cope with ever very short reading and get the mind idea of what the author is trying to transmit, the deficiencies on listening comprehension to understand the explanation given by the teacher, and the incapacity to express idea in complete thought shwow that students do not have the English Proficiency required to comprehed English Literature.

General Objetive

To identify the difficulties on English Literature Comprehension form Modern Language students at UASD, Language School.

Specific Objetive
1. To Verify if the methodology used by teachers at UASD Language School work effectively, in order to teach English Literature.
2. To analize if the students reading habit influences on English Literature Comprension.

3. To determine the factors that contribute to the difficulties of learning English Literature Comprehesion.

Defenition of Terms.

Difficulty: Is the obstacle or barrier for a person to reach his goal.

Comprehension skills: Are the ability to use context and prior knowledge to aid reading to make sense of what one reads and hears.

Limitation of the Study.

Doing a research project involves many factors that can provoke some limitatións in an investigation; for example: economical factors, time, sociological factors, cultural and environments. Another limitation could be the economical factor.

Review of Related Literature.

Background. History and Development.

The Modern Language Department is the continuation of "Dr. Rafael Trujillo Molina" ancient idioms institute, created in July 1957. At the beginning only English was taught. With the university organization law (5130), in 1959, it changed its name to the "language school "DR. Rafael Trujillo Molina" and French classes were include.

It was closed in 1960, and reopen after Trujillo´s death in 1961, since that time has been language school. In 1966-1967 it flowered with the renewal movement and it has function with great success.

At the end of 1970 the language school was transformed in language department and it functions under the humanities faculty, preparing students professionally, studying the language, not only as a tool for communication, but studying the language as an object itself. Language Department offers two bachelors degree, one major in English, and the other one major in French.

Throughout the time, the pensum has been updated to enhance the student´s skill, as a result more subjects that are critical for the student´s professional preparation, helping them to develop a more questioning mind, flexible thinking and knowledge of the target culture has been added to it.

Brief Discussion of the Origin of Literature.

The word literature comes from Latin "literal" this term was a creation of classical culture developed in ancient times by the writers of Hellenistic Alexandria and the Latin disciples. From Homer to the attic drama of the first and fourth centuries B.C., the only important concept of literature was that of poetry and poet.

The poet was essentially eclectic, and imitator a virtuous of form; the writer in prose, a scholar, grammar scholar, he was primarily a connoisseur of the masterpiece of the

past often more interested in the letter than in the spirit of the text. During the middle ages, the church had the power and the authority. Literature was influenced by the church as well. Literature was basically attached to religion and it was expressed basically in Latin

Definition of Literature.

According to Griswold (1981), "literature is all written production, strictly speaking, literature is first of all, intention, sensibility, impressibility, style; it is the expression of the way of perceiving things, the externalization of our experiences; it is, briefly speaking a mysterious art, the expression of the beauty by means of the written word".

English Literature.

The decade of the late 19th century, and the modernist of the early 20th century looked to continental European individual and movement for inspiration. Nor was attraction towards European intellectualism dead in the late 20th century, for by the mid 1980 the approach known as structuralism, phenomenon predominantly French and German in origin, infused the very study of English Literature itself in a host of published critical study and in university department. English Literature has enjoyed certain diffusion abroad, not only in predominantly English speaking countries. But also, in all those others, where English is the first choice of study as a second language.

Inportance of Literature Study.

Across all phases of the program, in both Spanish and English Language arts, students study literature. Discussions, writing projects, social studies content, and supplementary reading are all based on the literary selection being studied. The experience text relationship approach was adapted as the framework for the literature units.

The Reading Comprehension Process

Many years ago reading in English as a foreign language was perceived as a passive process. It was conceived as a decoding process of reconstructing the author's intended meaning by means of recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up a meaning for a text from the smallest textual units at the bottom which are letters and words to larger units at the top like phrases, sentences, clauses (Carrell, 1998).

Problems of second language reading and reading comprehension were viewed as being essentially decoding problems. Moreover, Carrell (1998) explains that before 1970 the process of reading in a foreign language was viewed as an attachment to oral language skills. The audio-lingual method implemented in the 1970s played down the importance of reading skills and dictated the primacy of listening over the others; also the importance given to the grapheme and phonemes by the structuralisms was responsible for the implementation of the decoding perspective in second language reading.

On the other hand, some other authors have a very different point of view about the reading process in a foreign language. According to Grabe (1998), in the 1980s the accepted theories about reading as decoding process changed dramatically. Thanks to authors such as Rumelhart (1980), Johnson (1981), Carrell and Eisterhold (1998) among others, the reading process was not simply a matter of extracting information from the texts but a process in "which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader's mind that he or she uses, and that in turn, may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text" (Grabe, 1998, p. 56).

EFL Student´s Difficulties on English Literature Comprehension.

Some scholars argue that introducing English Literature into English programs means introducing a culturally superior, if somewhat threatening, subject that represents a workd more powerful, more dominant and more compelling than our own. Some others go beyond saying that literature study impedes the student´s progress in language learning. From Bredella (1996)´s point of view, what students end up doing in literature classes is glossing vocabulary items".

The Differences Between Spoken, Witten, and Literary English.

The differences between spoken, written, and literary English can pose major problems for students learning English, whose vocabulary difficulties sometimes can be disguised by their conversational fluency, for example: children of immigrant parent can become proficient in everyday conversation in less than two years. However, it was take a longer period of time for these children to become proficient in literary English. According to Collier (1989) if teachers are not aware of the difference in the time it takes to achieve conversational fluency and proficiency with written English, they might diagnose as learning or reading disabled a conversationally proficient English Language learner who has trouble understanding literary English.

Reading Strategies when Approaching Literature in English.

Reading strategies provide helpful guidelines on how to apprach the reading passage. They helped the readers oranize the passage into main and supporting ideas for a better understanding of the test. Scanning and skimming for relavant cues such as number and capital letter made the reading less threatening and more readable. Reading strategies should be an integral part of the curriculum for EFL learners. Students lacked direction on how to cope with reading comprehension tests.

Palincsar (1993) discussed critical literacy, a concept that focuses on how reader´s problems are solved. She argued that students need to become self-regulated learners. These are learners, she asserted, who develop purposed for what they are about to read, Similar to when applying predicting skills, when readers apply self-monitoring strategies they are constantly asking themselves whether or not what they are reading makes sense to them. During this monitoring process, if they fing that word or an idea does not quite fit with what they already know they will apply their self-correct skills in order to fix the problem.

According to Paris (1991) good readers are able to expect problems in reading and fix them up as they occur. When a student comes across an unfamiliar word, he or she needs to decide whether to re-read the sentence, read ahead, sound the word out, or look in the dictionary. Ryder and Graves (1998) stated that it is important that teachers are aware of "metacognitive behavoir and its importance as a monitoring devices as students assess their comprehension and to apply fix-up strategies when comprehension fails.

Resarch Design and Methodology.

Population

We counted with a population of 20 students from the Anglo speaking Literature section, imparted at UASD Language School, Wednesdays from 6:P.M. to 9:P.M. and Fridays from 5:P.M. to 8:P.M.

Methodology

Since the goal of this resarch is not to test any hypothesis, but to investigate and describe the phenomenon while it is taking place naturally in order to learn more about it and try to generate hypothesis to be further studied, the present study is considered Descriptive.

Tools

Observation: observation has always been considered a mayor data collection on qualitative research. The main use of observation is for examining a phenomenon or behavior while it is going on.

Questionnaires: are printed forms for data collection which include questions for statement to which the subjects are expected to respond anonymously.

Interviews: are usually conducted on a one-to-one basic. They require a large amount of the investigator´s time during the interviews and also for transcribing and coding the data.

Procedure.

First of all, we spoke to the teachers to show them our project and asked them their experience in our investigation. The data for the present investigation was collected mainly through observation.

Presentation and Analysis of Research

In the previous chapter we presented the population used in our investigation followed by the design, and the methodology that we carried out, we also mentioned the tools that we used in older to collect the data, and the procedures implemented to get our research done.

General Results of the Observation.

When we entered the classroom, we found the teacher giving a brief introduction of the any that they were going to analyze that day. He asked the students to gather in groups of five person, as always, to read and analyze the short story for its further discussion.

General Results of the Teacher´s Questionnaires.

After analyzing teacher´s responses, we found that the elements to become a successful reader prior knowledge, cultural background in general, as well as, training aimed to develop reading skill in particular, and that the more a person knows about life in general, the easier for them to understand what is express in the test.

General Results of the Teacher´s Interviews.

Professors stated that the purpose of teaching English Literature to modern language students at UASD Language School is to get students acquainted with the culture associated to that language, ant introduce them to the different literary styles.

Conclusion

According to the results 42.86% of the students do not understand the literature vocabulary that find in the stories that the teacher assigned them to read. The lack of capacity to express ideas in complete thoughts found to be another difficulty, since based on the results, 19.64% of the students do not have this capacity. To our surprise 46.43% of the students said that they found English Literature is easy, while only 42.84% of them said that English Literature was difficult.

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